

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4021

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 4390

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF PRIME MINISTER RUMOR ON PROSPECTS FOR HIS
GOVERNMENT

REF: ROME 4329

1. THE DAY AFTER HIS GOVERNMENT RECEIVED ITS FINAL PARLIAMENTARY VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER RUMOR TO CONGRATULATE HIM AND SPENT OVER ONE HOUR WITH HIM. I NOTED WITH SATISFACTION THE SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITIES HE HAD RECEIVED IN BOTH CHAMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND EXPRESSED MY CONFIDENCE THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH LAY BEFORE IT.

2. RUMOR CONCURRED WITH MY OBSERVATION THAT HE HAD STRENGTHENED HIS CABINET BY THE ADDITION OF ANDREOTTI AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND COLOMBO AS MINISTER OF THE TREASURY AND PROBABLY HELPED PROTECT HIS LEFT FLANK BY BRINGING IN PSI LEFT LEADER MANCINI. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WERE THOSE WHO FELT THAT THIS IS A TRANSITION GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL LAST ONLY UNTIL THE REFERENDUM (MAY 12), HE BELIEVES THE GOVERNMENT COULD LAST MUCH LONGER PROVIDED HE CAN MAINTAIN THE COHESIVENESS OF HIS OWN PARTY AND KEEP THE SOCIALISTS FROM ASSUMING TOO MILITANT A STANCE. A MAJOR FACTOR INFLUENCING THE LONGEVITY OF HIS GOVERNMENT, HE FELT, WOULD BE THE MARGIN WITH
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WHICH THE WINNING SIDE CARRIES THE REFERENDUM. UNLESS THERE IS A

SUBSTANTIAL (E.G. 60-40) VICTORY FOR ONE SIDE, RUMOR SAID,
THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT PROBABLY WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTINUE.

3. RUMOR ADMITTED THAT NOT TOO MUCH LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY CAN BE
EXPECTED BETWEEN NOW AND THE REFERENDUM BECAUSE THERE WILL BE ONLY
8 OR 10 WORKING DAYS OF THE PARLIAMENT DURING THIS PERIOD (ROME
4248). ALTHOUGH MATTERS OF REAL SUBSTANCE THUS CANNOT BE TACKLED
UNTIL AFTER THE REFERENDUM, THIS DELAY WILL GIVE RUMOR TIME TO
REALLY START PREPARING HIMSELF FOR THE MANY ACTIVITIES IN WHICH
THE GOVERNMENT MUST ENGAGE ITSELF, PARTICULARLY, FIGHTING
INFLATION, AVOIDING TOO MANY STRIKES, BRINGING THE BALANCE OF PAY-
MENTS UNDER CONTROL, AND MOVING AHEAD ON KEY REFORMS.

4. COMMENT: RUMOR'S OPTIMISM THAT HIS GOVERNMENT CAN SURVIVETHE
REFERENDUM IF THE VOTE MARGIN OF THE WINNING SIDE IS NOT TOO LARGE
IS ALSO REFLECTED IN COMMENTS EMBASSY HAS BEEN GETTING FROM OTHER
DC SOURCES. IT IS CLEAR THAT A BIG WIN BY EITHER SIDE WOULD
GREATLY INCREASE THE DESTABILIZING EFFECT OF THE REFERENDUM ON
THE RUMOR GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, THE FIFTH RUMOR GOVERNMENT FACES
VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN ADDITION TO THE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN
AND IT IS HARD AT THIS POINT TO ACCEPT RUMOR'S OPTIMISM COMPLETELY,
BUT IT IS AN INDICATION OF HIS HOPES AND INTENTIONS. VOLPE

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